

Government Relations Report

by: Gene Brandi
ABF Vice President



The long awaited release of the Federal Task Force report announcing a National Strategy to Promote the Health of Honey Bees and Other Pollinators has created a buzz throughout the country in the media and throughout the agricultural and beekeeping industries. While we have not yet had the opportunity to thoroughly digest the contents of this 79-page report (since it was just released 48 hours ago as I write this) we certainly intend to respond to the various federal agencies with our comments. ABF President Tim Tucker, Fran Boyd of Meyers and Associates and I have already scheduled meetings with USDA and White House representatives with whom we will visit in early June to discuss the report and the actions of federal agencies. At this time it appears that American Honey Producers Association officers will attend these meetings, and perhaps others we are able to schedule

with additional federal agencies as well, in order that we can present a unified bee industry response to the various issues raised in the report.

One of the issues with which the ABF has been involved for the past several months pertains to the development of State Pollinator Protection Programs (MP3's) as well as an Agricultural Community Pollinator Labeling Work Group. Many thanks to George Hansen, Mario Jacob, Dave Mendes, and Tim Tucker who have all been part of the ABF efforts with these issues. Tim and I plan to attend a meeting of the Pollinator Labeling Work Group while we are in Washington, DC in June in order to discuss ABF concerns with the draft statement of principles proposed by the work group. The work group is comprised of a variety of agricultural stakeholders and we want to make certain that our concerns are heard and addressed.

During our June trip to Washington, DC, Tim and I also plan to visit some Congressional offices in order to help assure funding for honey bee related programs, including ARS research. We are pleased that the USDA Agricultural Research Service has announced they will establish a new base-funded Pollinator Health Research laboratory at the Western Regional Research Center. This research project is currently funded at \$1.3M per year. The bulk of the research will be conducted at the WRRC's worksite co-located with the University of California - Davis, building on the synergy between the Honey and Pollination Center and the Department of Entomology and Nematology at UC -Davis. Fiscal Year 2015 funding will be utilized for establishing laboratory space for two senior research scientists and three support staff. It is expected that these five research positions will be filled by March 2016. We understand that the eventual goal is to build a new USDA bee research facility on or near the UC Davis campus.

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